

Closing Plenary IA Summit 2006

Peter Merholz

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 The Information Architecture Institute

First off, I want to thank ASIST and the Conference Committee for allowing me the honor of giving the closing plenary.

I'm Peter Merholz. I'm the Director of Practice Development at Adaptive Path. I'm also currently serving as President of the Information Architecture Institute. Some of you know me as the "post-it note" guy.

I now ask you to indulge me in a bit of biography. In preparing this talk I realized that my professional development has quite closely paralleled the development of the field of information architecture. For those who have attended prior summits, or practiced IA for a while, this might be a refresher. But over half of the attendees this year are first-timers, and I think a look back will be helpful.

So lets go back from 2006, 2005, 2004, 2003 2002, 2001, 2000 (the year of the first IA Summit), 1999, 1998, 97, 96, 95, still back, 94, 1993.

2006

2005

2004

2003

2002

2001

2000

1999

1998

1997

1996

1995

1994

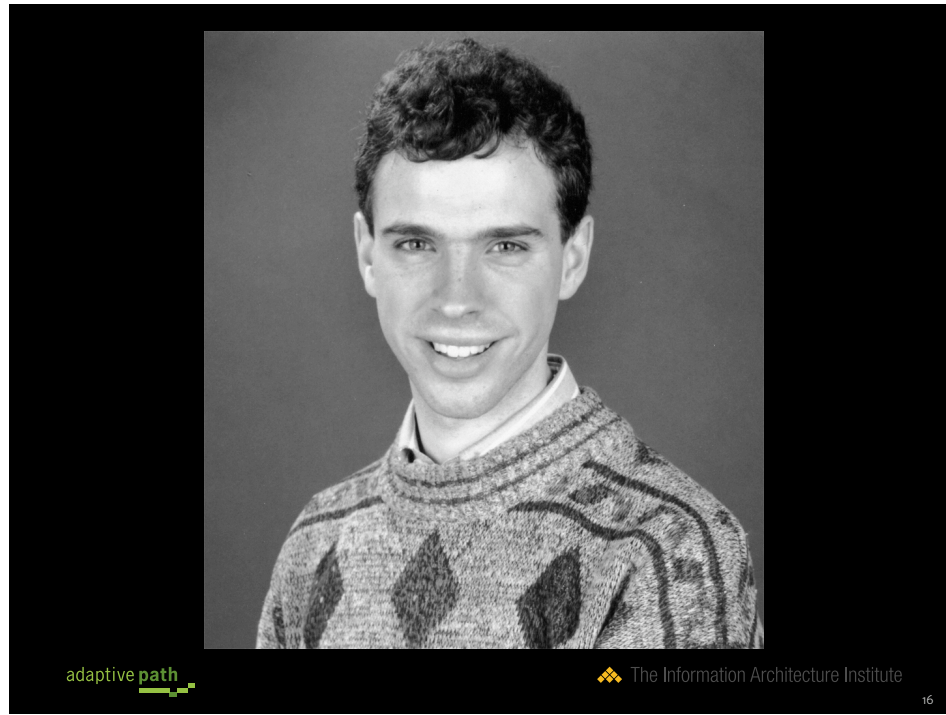
1993

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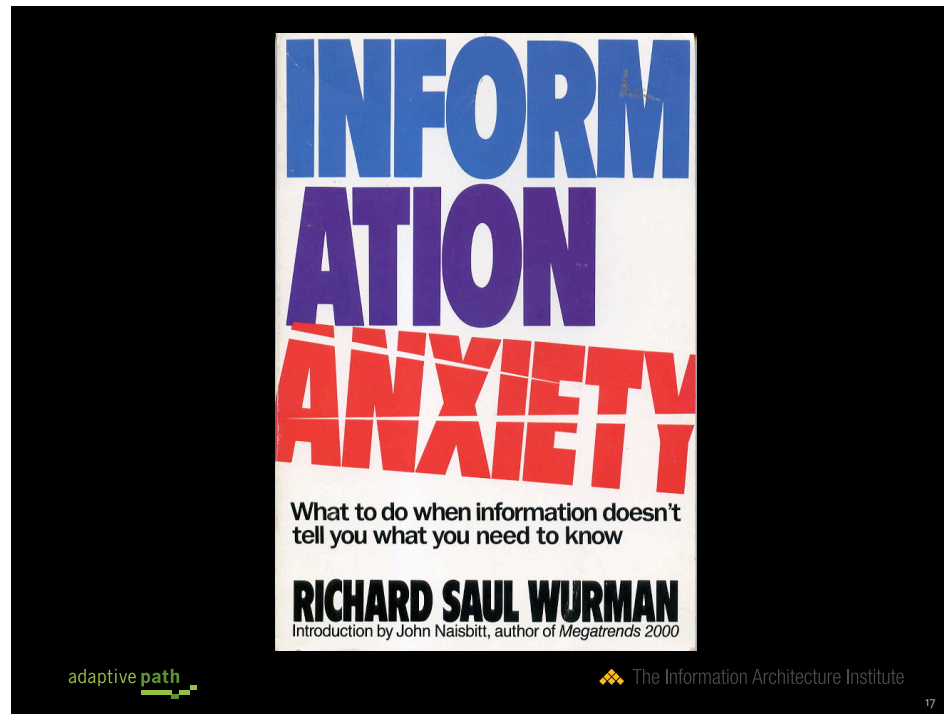
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I looked something like this....



I worked as a research assistant for a professor in the Graduate School of Education at UC Berkeley. One day I saw on his shelf a curious book. Titled "Information Anxiety," it was written by a man of whom I'd never heard -- Richard Saul Wurman.



When you first look at it, the book is quite strange -- the detailed table of contents is 21 pages long (for a book that's 330 pages), and it's filled with diagrams, sidebars, pullquotes, and the like. In it, Richard propounds his thesis that in a world with such rapid creation of information, we need to be explicit about how we organize and present that information.

Every time the dogs are arranged in a different way, you can start seeing new information about the relationships. You might see that the most popular dogs are the shorter-haired ones, or that the most expensive dogs are the small dogs, or that in certain breeds the females are bigger than the males, etc.

Each way I arrange these dogs tells you something different about them; each mode of organization provides additional information. The creative organization of information creates new information. The dogs don't change, but the information about them does. And it takes no prior knowledge or understanding to comprehend.

I could organize these dogs alphabetically . . .



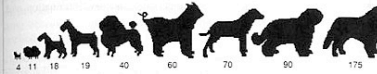
or by category (country of origin, for example)



or by time (for instance, according to the year in which the breed was officially recognized by the American Kennel Club).



Then again, I might arrange them by weight in pounds,



by height in inches (other kinds of continua),



or by breeds as categorized by the American Kennel Club.




Real learning about the dogs comes from comparing organizations. For example, you can see that the Afghan hound is taller than both the Labrador retriever and the komondor, but is outweighed by both. Most likely they are stackier, which makes sense when you see that they are both in the working dogs category while the Afghan is a hound.

You can do this with many things; it makes your mind work differently because it shows the importance of relaxing and thinking about the arrangement of information before you make it complex. It's a process of simplification, not complication. And you realize that by simplifying, by taking one point of view, one slice, you can make something terribly clear. Whereas if you tried to say this dog is the most popular in Wisconsin, and is of medium height, and said all these things at once, you

Here's a spread on various ways one might categorize dogs. I found myself totally geeking out to stuff. Looking at the world this way made sense to me.

1992

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Wurman actually wrote that book in... (page back)

1991

1990

1989

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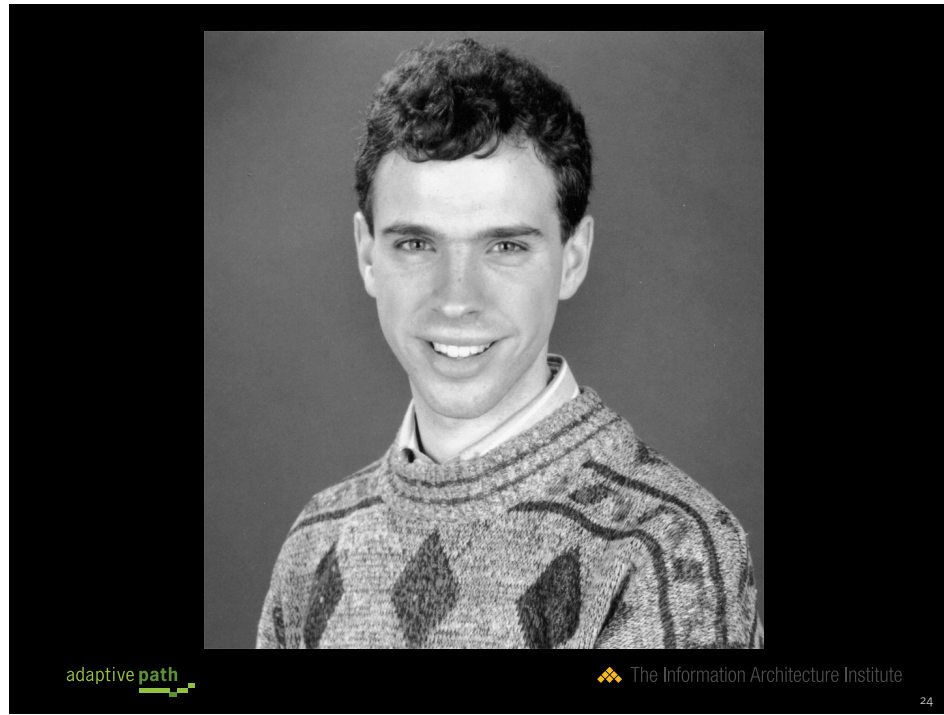
1989,



the same year that Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web. Wurman was concerned with the overwhelming amount of printed information; the internet is never mentioned.

Peter Morville's talk on Ambient Findability reminded me that this was also the year of Marcia Bates seminal essay, "The Design of Browsing and Berrypicking Techniques for the Online Search Interface."

As a further aside, Wurman coined the phrase "information architects" in 1975 for an American Institute of Architects meeting. He was never able to get it to catch on. But more on that later.
(Reference at: http://frontwheeldrive.com/richard_saul_wurman.html)



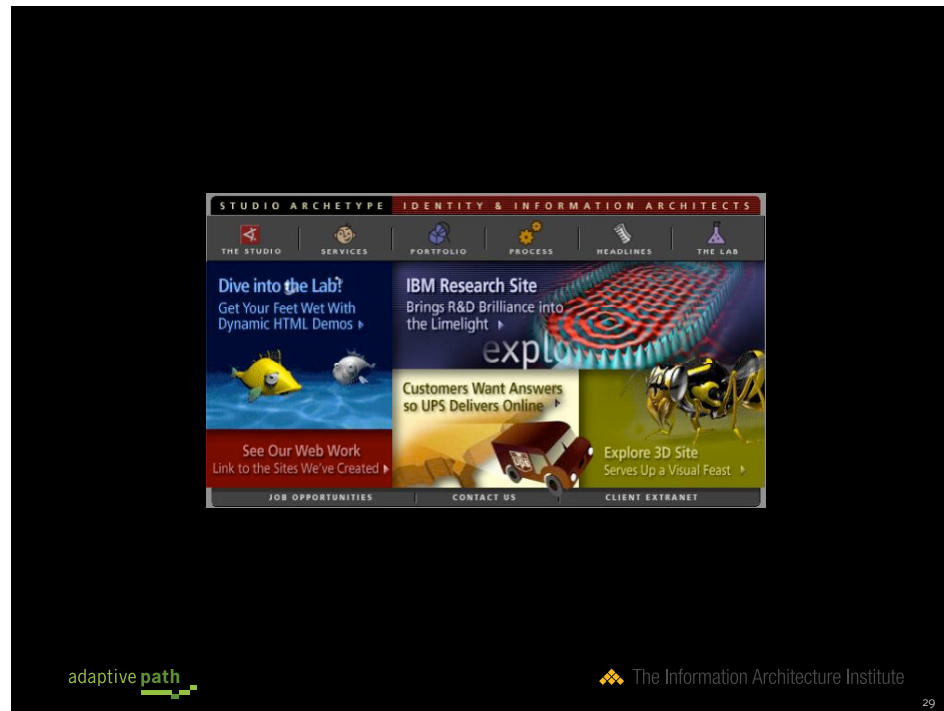
So, there I was in 1993, inexplicably drawn to the problem of too much information, and how to manage it all. Not knowing what to do about it, I set it aside and pursued a career in multimedia design and development, which, after a couple of years (1994, 1995) leads me to Studio Archetype in 1996.

1993

1994

1995

1996



Studio Archetype was a leading graphic design company in San Francisco. Archetype is important in the history of information architecture because they were among the first design agencies to label themselves as "information architects." They were definitely descendants of Wurman's philosophy, practicing "design for understanding."

Design for understanding

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It was a very intuitive approach to IA -- like as happened in many other places, people there realized that if they were going to design complex multimedia experiences (IA at Studio Archetype started with CD-ROMs), they needed to map the experience and present the information in a clear fashion.

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It was around this time that I wrote an article for the now-defunct The Net magazine, on the subject of "Navigating the Internet." Sadly, I cannot find this article. It was the first time I deeply probed issues of usability, navigation, and search, and in it,

W E B R E V I E W

Web Architect DESIGN STUDIO



by
[Peter Morville](#)
Argus Associates
Ann Arbor, Michigan
<http://argus-inc.com/>

When asked about the state of the Web, users explain that after frustration with slow speeds, finding and organizing information are the major problems. Conjectural research shows that by the year 2000, poorly architected Web sites will have caused more fatalities than clogged LA freeways and post office bureaucracies combined. Forget about health care reform and the overhaul of our educational system. The quality of our global information architecture will be the critical issue for the 21st century.

Further Examples The difficulty in finding information holds true for the Internet as a whole and for individual Web sites in particular. Since we can feel completely secure that the organization of the Internet as a whole is

Site Maps
[Fulcrum](#)

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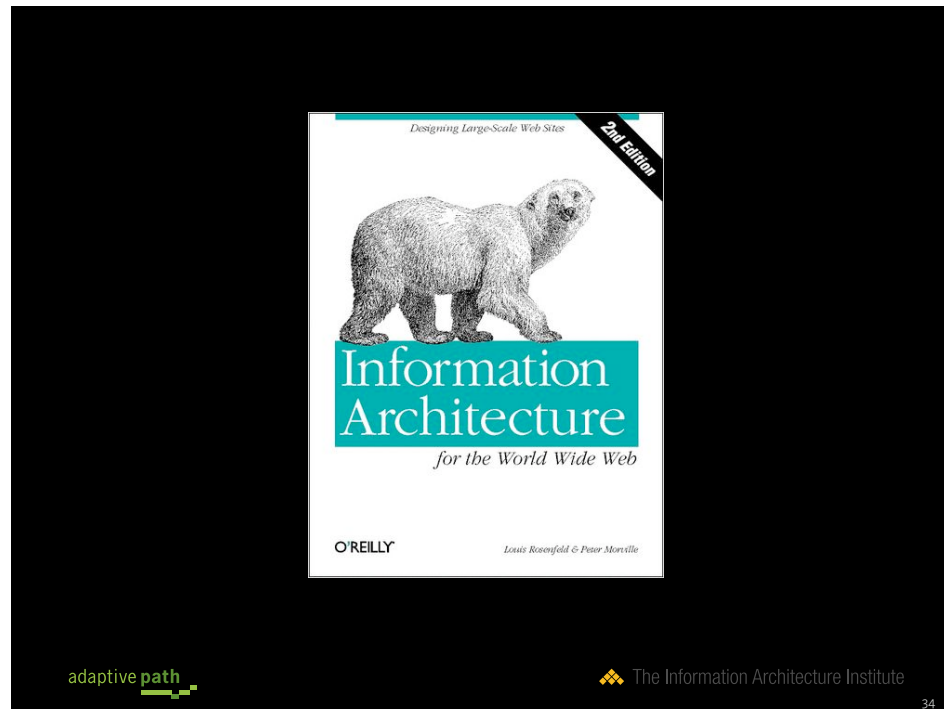
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I interviewed some guy named Peter Morville, who, with his colleague Lou Rosenfeld, wrote a column called "Web Architect" for a webzine called "Web Review."

Peter and Lou were unrepentant librarians bringing their background to the web.

1998



In 1998 they published the first edition of the "Polar Bear" book - "Information Architecture for the World Wide Web." The publication of the book helped legitimate the field of information architecture.

But what I was doing as an IA was addressed in only two of the chapters. The rest of the chapters dealt with things I didn't deal with explicitly (labels, metadata, search, etc.) What was going on?

What was going on was the struggle that came to dominate the early years of IA practice, the intuition-driven approach of "West Coast IA" versus the rigorous content analysis approach of "polar bear IA".

1999

2000

The screenshot shows the website for the ASIS Summit 2000, Information Architecture. The header features the event title in a stylized font and the dates 'April 7-9 2000 - Logan Airport Hilton - Boston, MA'. A navigation menu on the left includes links for Home, Speakers, Presentations, Listserv, and Program. The main content area is titled 'PROGRAM SCHEDULE' and lists the following events:

PROGRAM SCHEDULE	
Friday, April 7, 2000	
7-9pm	Reception / Networking
Saturday, April 8, 2000	
8-9am	Registration / Continental Breakfast
9-10am	Welcome / Keynote Presentation Louis Rosenfeld , President, Argus Associates
10-10:30am	Coffee / Networking Exercise Sponsored by <i>IXL Corporation</i>
10:30am-12:00noon	Session #1 Gayle Curtis - Creative Director, vivid studios Seth Gordon - Principal of Experience Design, ZEFER Paul Kahn - President, Dynamic Diagrams Peter Merholz - Creative Director, Epinions.com

At the bottom of the page, there are logos for 'adaptive path' and 'The Information Architecture Institute'. A small page number '37' is visible in the bottom right corner.

These came to a head in 2000 at the inaugural IA Summit. Lou was the conference chair, and invited web designers and librarians to meet, present, and share ideas. It took place in an airport hotel over a weekend, because the organizers were concerned people wouldn't be able to get time away from their jobs for this stuff.

In part of my talk I railed against the tyranny of the hierarchy, and how the ideas of hierarchical organization and of having one true location for something might make sense in a library, it didn't make sense in the digital world.

I was nearly booed off the stage. I heard voices from the crowd assert that librarians had other ways of organizing information. And I thought, "Why aren't I seeing them?"

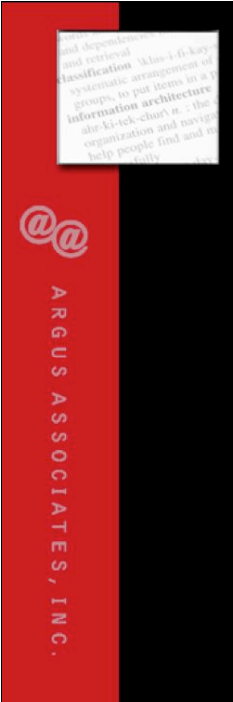
The screenshot shows a web page for the Argus Center for Information Architecture. At the top, there is a logo with the letters 'a', 'C', 'I', and 'a' in circles, followed by the text 'Argus Center for Information Architecture'. To the right are links for 'Index', 'About the ACIA', and 'Contact Us'. Below this is a navigation bar with 'By Argus' and a breadcrumb trail: 'ACIA Main Page > Information Architecture 2000 > Pre-Conference Seminar'. The main content area features a sidebar with links for 'Conference Program', 'Pre-Conference Seminar', 'Registration', and 'Travel and Hotel'. The main heading is 'argus seminar' in orange, followed by 'Synonyms and Taxonomies: Thesaurus Design for Information Architects' in red. The date and location are 'La Jolla, California, Wednesday, October 25, 2000'. Below this is a section titled 'Pre-Conference Seminar' with a link to 'view seminar materials'. The text describes the seminar as the first in a series of advanced interactive workshops on Thesaurus Design, led by experts at Argus. It mentions that the seminar will cover presentation, discussion, and hands-on exercises to explain why a thesaurus is an essential component of large web sites or intranets. A section titled 'Who should attend?' states that the seminar is designed for professionals with one to two years of experience designing information.

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Later that year I attended IA 2000, and I attend the Synonyms and taxonomies workshop given by Peter Morville and Samantha Bailey. They throw down some pretty hardcore LIS beats...



and dependent...
and retrieval...
classification (also fi-kay-
systematic arrangement of
groups, to put terms in a y
information architecture
ale-ti-tek-chu'e-n : the
organization and navigation
help people find and to

ARGUS ASSOCIATES, INC.

Structure & Relationships

Pre- & Post-Coordination

Enumerative Classification Schemes

- Pre-coordinate (*more compound terms*)
- All terms are enumerated (listed) in their entirety in the scheme.

Library of Congress Classification Scheme

Synthetic Classification Schemes

- Post-coordinate (*more uni-terms*)
- New terms can be created by combining terms during a search (AND).

Art & Architecture Thesaurus

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, and I come away a changed man. "This stuff is great! Why hasn't it been getting out to the larger world of web design?"

2001

peterme.com Thoughts, links, and essays from Peter Merholz

petermescellany petermes


[Home](#)
[Archives](#)
[Archives before June 13, 2001](#)
[RSS Feed](#)
[Adaptive Path \(my company!\)](#)
[About peterme](#)
[Coordinates](#)
Most of the Time
 Oakland, CA
Interests
Current
 American history around the time of the Revolution, figuring out how to marry top-down task-based information architecture processes with bottom-up document-based ones, finding a good dentist in San Francisco Oakland
Parental
 Designing the user experience (interaction design, information architecture, user research, etc.), cognitive science, ice cream, films and film theory, girls, commuter bicycling, coffee, travel, theoretical physics for laypeople, single malt scotch, fresh salmon nigiri, hanging

Innovation in Classification. Posted on 09/23/2001.

In this post, two threads are at work. The first addresses an issue often raised in user-centered design, which is that its discipline and process don't encourage innovation—many people equate UCD with usability engineering, a practice which seems to limit creativity, encouraging designs similar to those already out there, because that's what people are familiar with. During Adaptive Path's Web2001 presentation, a question from audience was, "How do user experience methods lead to innovation?"

The second thread involves faceted classification, one of the most powerful, yet least understood, methods of organizing information. Most folks, when thinking about organizing objects or information, immediately think of a hierarchical, or taxonomic, organization; a top-down structure, where you start with a number of broad categories that get ever more detailed, until you arrive at the object. In such structures, each object has a single home, and typically, one path to get there—this is how things are organized in "the real world", where each item can only be in one place. Oftentimes, when thinking of organizing information, a hierarchy is where people begin (think Yahoo!).

Faceted classification, on the other hand, is a bottom-up scheme. Here, each object is tagged with a certain set of attributes and values (these are the facets), and the organization of these objects emerges from this classification, and how a user chooses to access them. Toys, for example, lend themselves to a faceted classification, with the facets being things like, "Suitable Age," "Price," "Subject Type," "Brand," and even "Character" (like Barbie or Elmo). Someone might be price conscious, and want to start there; another knows that the child in question loves science toys, and wants to begin with that. Faceted classification allows for exploration directed by the user, where a

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2001, Innovation in Classification. A non-librarian promotes ideas from the LIS world. If you read this post, I get much of it deeply wrong, but it served the purpose of broadening interest in what many LIS folks thought was difficult and arcane.

2002

2003

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In 2003, the IA Summit happened in Portland. There we were cloistered in our hotel ballrooms, talking about metadata and the shape of information. And we learned, through our occasional contact with the outside world, that the United States declared war on Iraq. Riot police used our hotel as a rendezvous spot, so during our session breaks, we'd be discussing facets, and men with face shields would be storming past. The onset of the war upset me, but I couldn't imagine a group of more emotionally nurturing people than those around me at that time. The degree to which this professional community is so... real, so authentic, never ceases to amaze me.

2003, 2004, 2005...

2004

2005

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The IA Summit recovers from the dot bust. Information architects discuss the shape of information, facet analysis is mulled over umpteen times, the term folksonomy is coined on the Institute's mailing list.

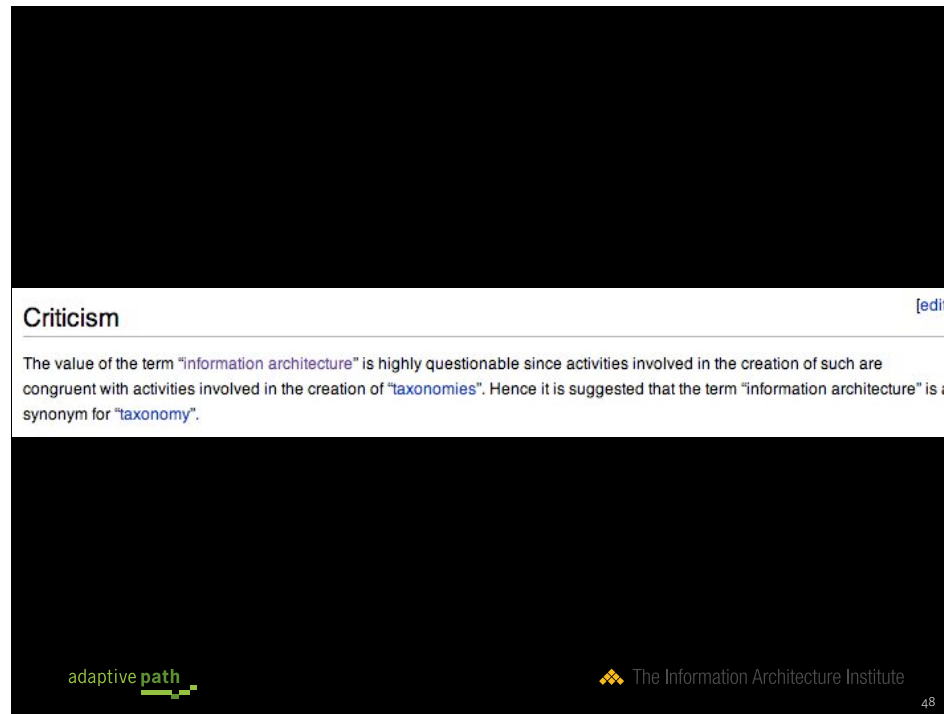
2006



And now we're here in 2006, and boy, do IAs like tags. I thought things had gotten crazy last year with five sessions on facets; this year we have seven sessions with "tags" in the title, and tags have found their way into many other talks.

Anyway, here in 2006 we have more attendees than ever before. Information architecture practice flourishes within organizations. Information architecture is as strong as ever.

Both something else happened with the publication of the polar bear book, and the first IA Summit. Information Architecture became solely a web phenomenon.

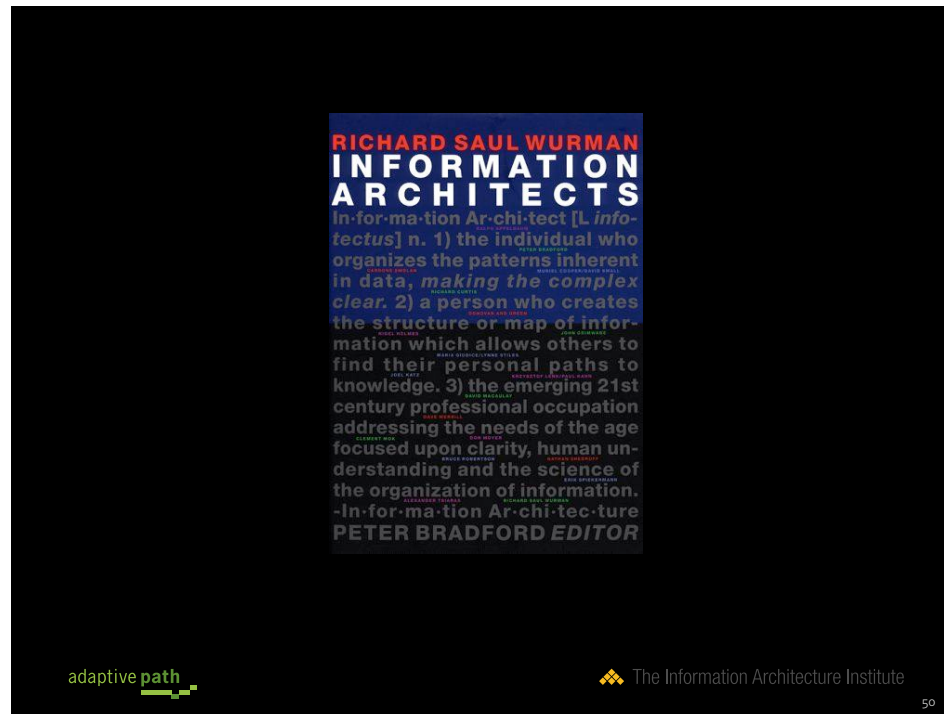


Even worse, for many, it become synonymous with developing web site taxonomies. (wikipedia entry)

This isn't how it had to be. In fact, if you read Peter Morville's "a brief history of information architecture," you'll run across this passage:

In 1996, a book titled *Information Architects* appeared in our offices. We learned that a fellow by the name of Richard Saul Wurman had coined the expression 'information architect' in 1975. After reading his book, I remember thinking 'this is not information architecture, this is information design'.

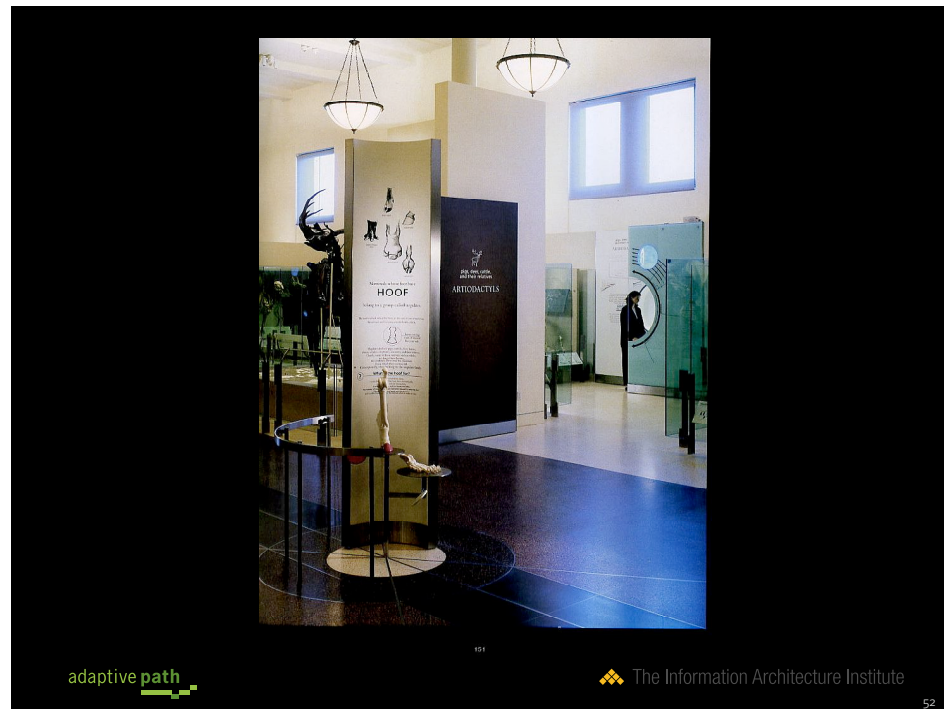
Peter Morville



The book to which Peter refers is a massive coffee table tome, highlighting the efforts of 20 individuals and teams as they try to "organize the patterns inherent in data, making the complex clear."

"organize the patterns inherent in data,
making the complex clear."

Peter is part right -- the bulk of the case studies refer to information design and graphics. But he wasn't wholly right -- there are also case studies of CD-ROMs, wayfinding within office buildings, and...



museum design, including signage, flow of exhibits, and the like.

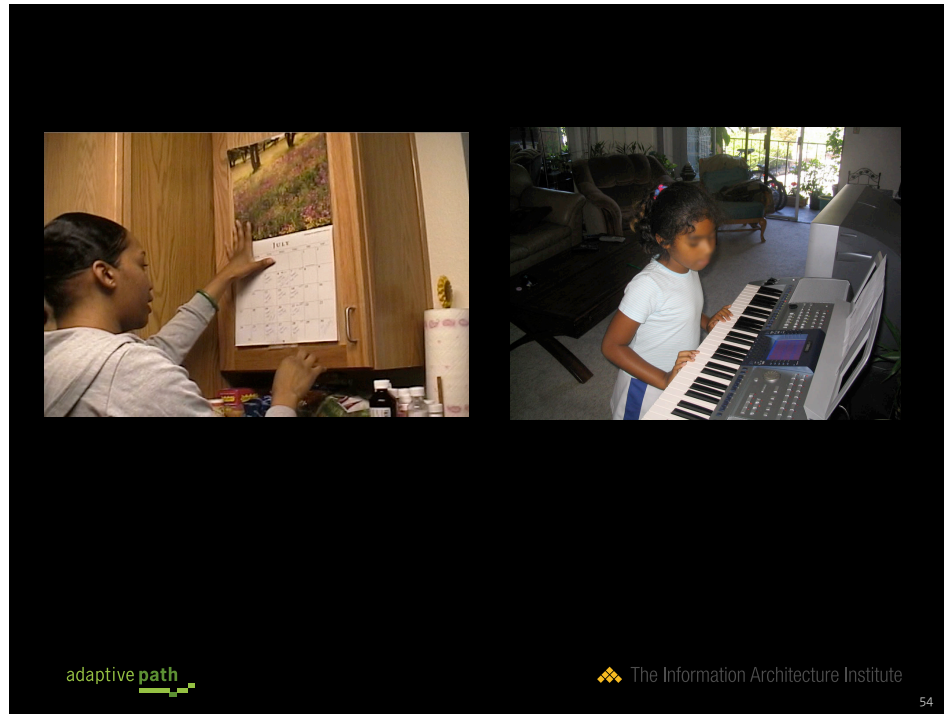
Now, I'll grant that it was bizarre to have a whole book on "Information Architects" with no representation from the world of library and information science. But, in some ways, Wurman's naive approach was at its heart more expansive.

Which, at the time, might have been its problem. Peter and Lou decided to appropriate "information architecture" to describe their work in designing the information systems of large-scale web sites. And it stuck in a way that Wurman's attempt never did.

But, when IA fell under the influence of the librarians, it became restricted in scope to that which librarians are comfortable -- documents, and, specifically, documents and pages on the web.

But that's starting to change. And it's starting to change for one simple reason.

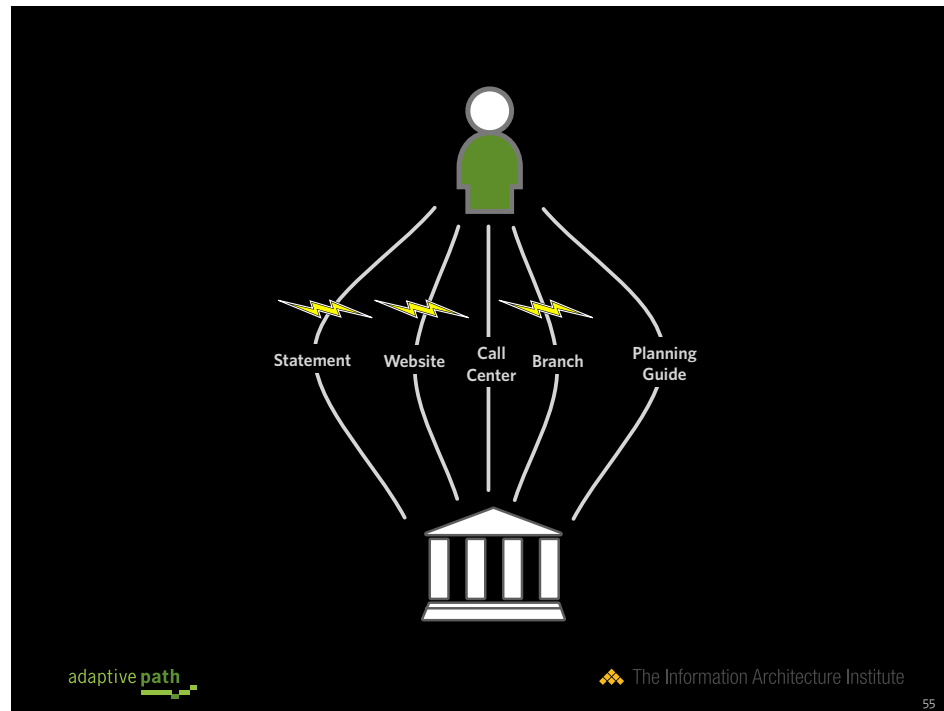
User Research



Research. Specifically, ethnographic-style research, where we go beyond focusing on just the product under question, and endeavor to understand more about our user's contexts -- the multiple ways they engage with an organization, the pressures they face as they attempt to do so, and the like.

The increasing acceptance of conducting research is leading to a profound change in information architecture practice. This is because research makes apparent that you can't reduce the problem to a single domain or channel (like web sites). People interact with multiple channels in order to get things done.

And since information architects want nothing more than to satisfy the user, they recognize that focusing their energies solely on a website is insufficient.



So we're starting to see the development of cross-channel information architecture.

This diagram is a modification of one from a recent project of mine. Though hired to focus on the website, our research demonstrated challenges across a number of touchpoints -- and that "fixing" the website, while valuable, wouldn't have the full impact of reconsidering how the organization approaches the customer experience.

Information architecture principles
apply in all shared information
environments:

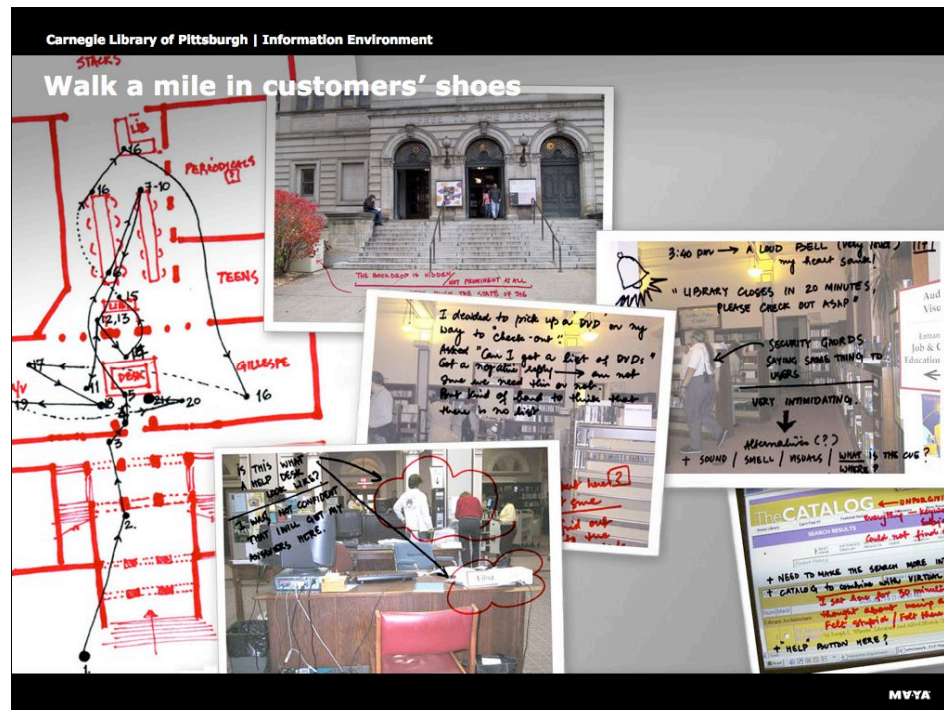
Virtual, such as the Web;

Physical, such as built environments like
museums, libraries, hospitals; and

Procedural, such as in flows of
information in work processes.

Forthcoming IA Institute Business Plan

These realizations are what lead to this passage in the IA Institute Business Plan



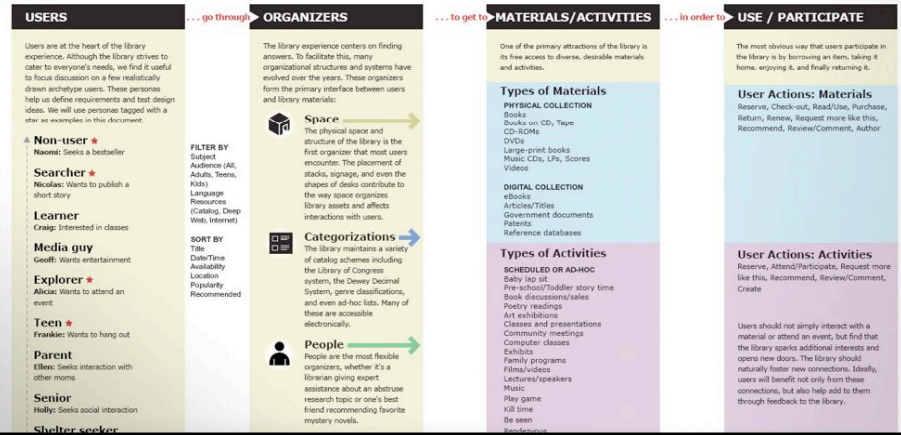
The current canonical case study for this right now is the work MAYA did for the Carnegie Libraries. Though originally brought in to address the design of information kiosks, through their research they uncovered a far more complex set of problems, and by presenting innovative design solutions, they were able to convince the library to let them come up with an information architecture that spans the virtual and the physical. They even spent a lot of time testing their labels! (slides shown here are taken from the four decks on this page: http://www.maya.com/web/what/what_sightings_events_iaworkshop_dec05.mtml)

We defined the basic framework (information architecture)

Components of the Library Experience

Users go through organizers to get to materials and activities

We analyzed the users' present-day experience with the library through input sessions with stakeholders, shadowing of users and librarians, and the development of archetypal personas and scenarios. Identified here are the four major components of the library experience.



What is the hierarchy of information?

Classification Scheme

Orientation, Identification, Education, and Connection

We've organized signs into five broad categories. This will help guide visual design, allowing sign designers to create consistent styles and templates. It will also help us make decisions about the relative importance of signs and how much of the user's attention should be devoted to each kind of communication. Each category is further divided into sub-categories, and examples of each are provided.

Orient/Wayfinding [A]

Display the scope of physical spaces, time-based events and provide directions to major areas.

Spatial [A-1]

- * Library map
- * Area map
- * Directory
- * Directions

Temporal [A-2]

- * Event calendar

Status [A-3]

- * Open/Closed
- * Hours of operation
- * Holiday schedule

Identify Area [B]

Identify building, areas, stacks, and facilities within the library system.

Major Areas [B-1]

- * Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh
- * Entrance/Exit
- * New and Featured
- * Coffee Bar
- * Lounge
- * Teens
- * Children's
- * Magazines and Newspapers
- * Movies, Music & Audiobooks

Stacks [B-2]

- * _____ Collection (Open Shelves)
- * _____ Collection (Closed Shelves)
- * LOC Subject (e.g., U.S. History)
- * Subtopic (e.g., Vegetarian cookbooks)
- * Location (e.g., Stack 16)

Facilities [B-3]

- * Meeting room
- * Restrooms
- * Elevator

CLP Network and Beyond [B-4]
** Immediate neighborhood*

Identify Action [C]

Identify actions that take place in the library.

Actions [C-1]

- * Ask a Librarian
- * Find it Here
- * Explore the Internet
- * Browse (Open/Closed Shelves)
- * Customer Services
- * Self-Checkout
- * Returns
- * Device-based actions (Photocopier, microfilm, listening booths, etc.)

Educate [D]

Instruct, explain and inform library users to encourage self-sufficiency and help them become expert users.

Instruct : "Just-in-time help to get results" [D-1]

- How to...
- * Sign up for an event
- * Use online databases
- * Access online databases

Explain: "Transforming 1st-time-user into power-user" [D-2]

- Did you know?
- * Fiction is shelved by author's last name
- FAQ
- * How is fiction organized?

Inform: "What CLP and its users expect of each other?" [D-3]

- * Usage policies (Internet time limit: 30 min)
- * Behavior expectations (no smoking)
- * Legal disclaimers and disclosures

Connect [E]

Establish connections between library's activities and resources in order to reveal them to the users serendipitously.

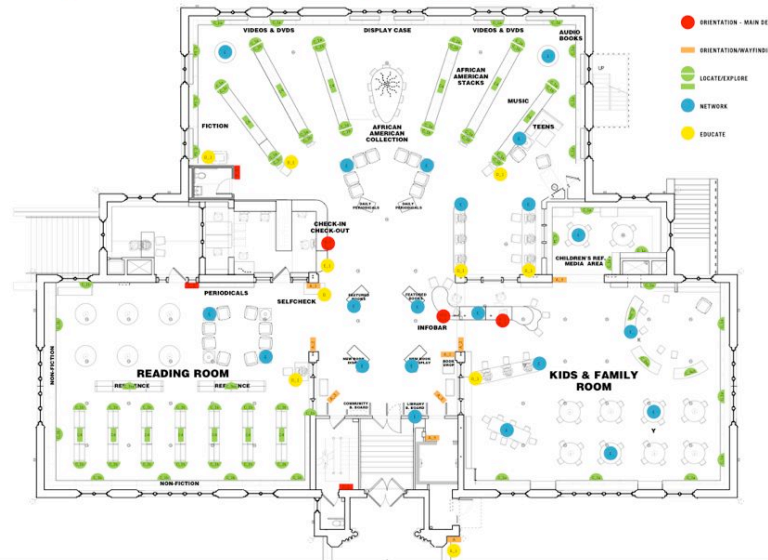
Related connections (map directly to user actions/goal) [E-1]

- * Sponsored by the library
- * Sponsored/Cosponsored by a trusted third party (e.g., regional library initiatives or partnership with hospital)
- * Sponsored by the community (e.g., James Tunel lecture at CMU)

Random connections (serendipitous in nature) [E-2]

- * Sponsored by the library
- * Sponsored/Cosponsored by a trusted 3rd party (e.g., regional library initiatives or partnership with hospital)
- * Sponsored by the community (e.g., neighborhood meeting, bulletin boards)

An example information blueprint (Landesberg Design)



Reference Desk = Ask a Librarian

Based on extensive survey, lexicon shifts to "ask a librarian".

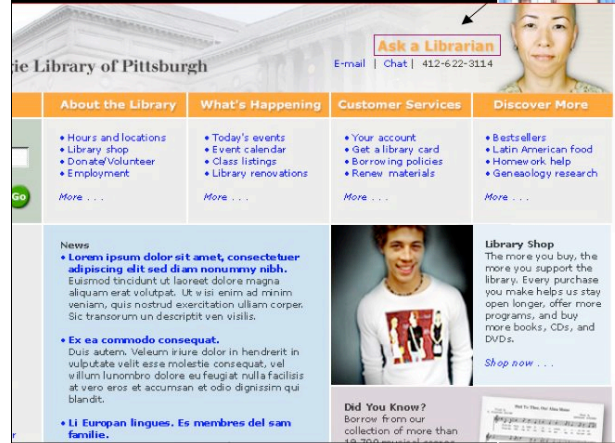
User-centered (not system-centered) language



Homewood branch

Ask a Librarian

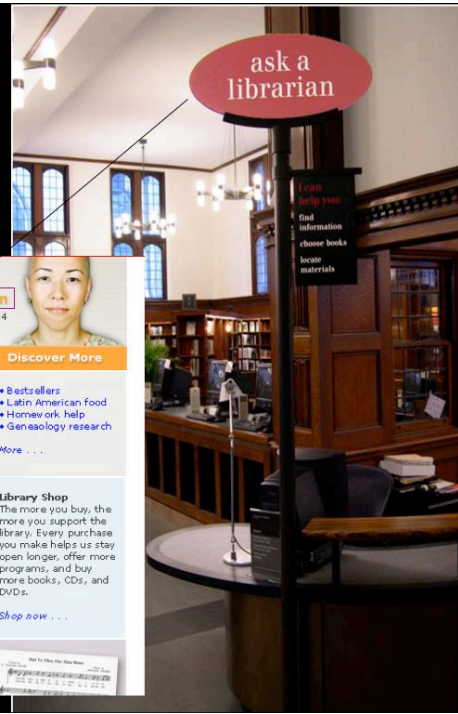
Consistent across "user interfaces"
from website to physical site...

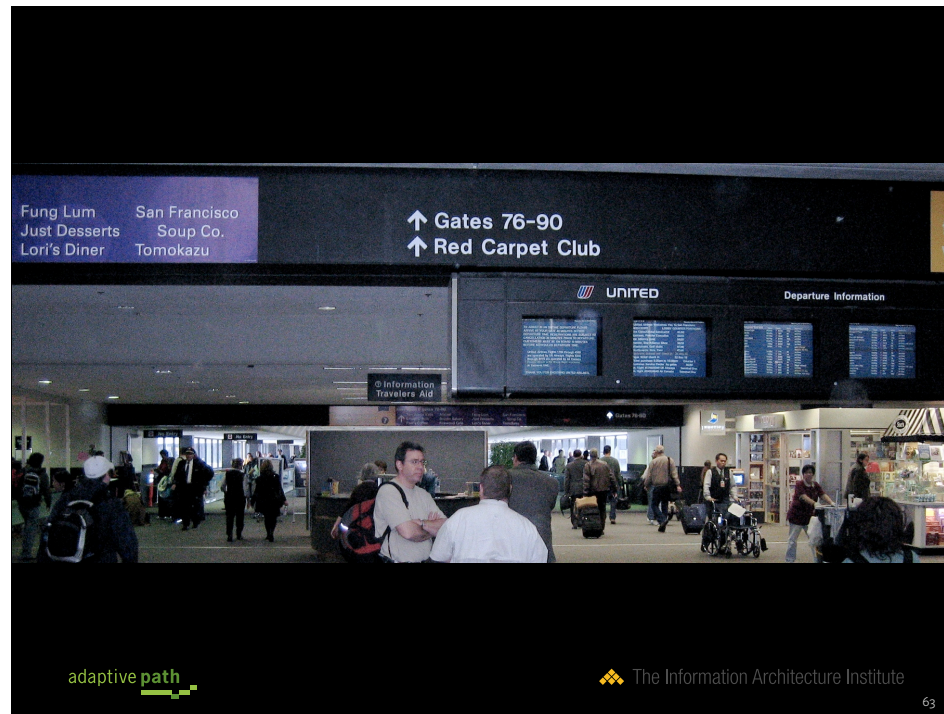


The screenshot shows the website interface for the University of Pittsburgh library. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the text "University of Pittsburgh" and "Ask a Librarian" in a red box, with links for "Email" and "Chat | 412-622-3114". Below this is a grid of service categories:

About the Library	What's Happening	Customer Services	Discover More
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Hours and locationsLibrary shopDonate/VolunteerEmployment <p>More . . .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Today's eventsEvent calendarClass listingsLibrary renovations <p>More . . .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Your accountGet a library cardBorrowing policiesRenew materials <p>More . . .</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">BestsellersLatin American foodHomework helpGenealogy research <p>More . . .</p>

Below the grid, there is a "News" section with a blue background and a "Library Shop" section with a photo of a smiling man. The "Did You Know?" section is partially visible at the bottom.





Think about all the environments that could benefit from this kind of thinking. Most of you flew here, so you went through an airport. Airports are drenched in information -- flight times, signs pointing you to where to go, kiosks to get your tickets, rules about security, shops and restaurants. Would your experience have been improved with a little IA?

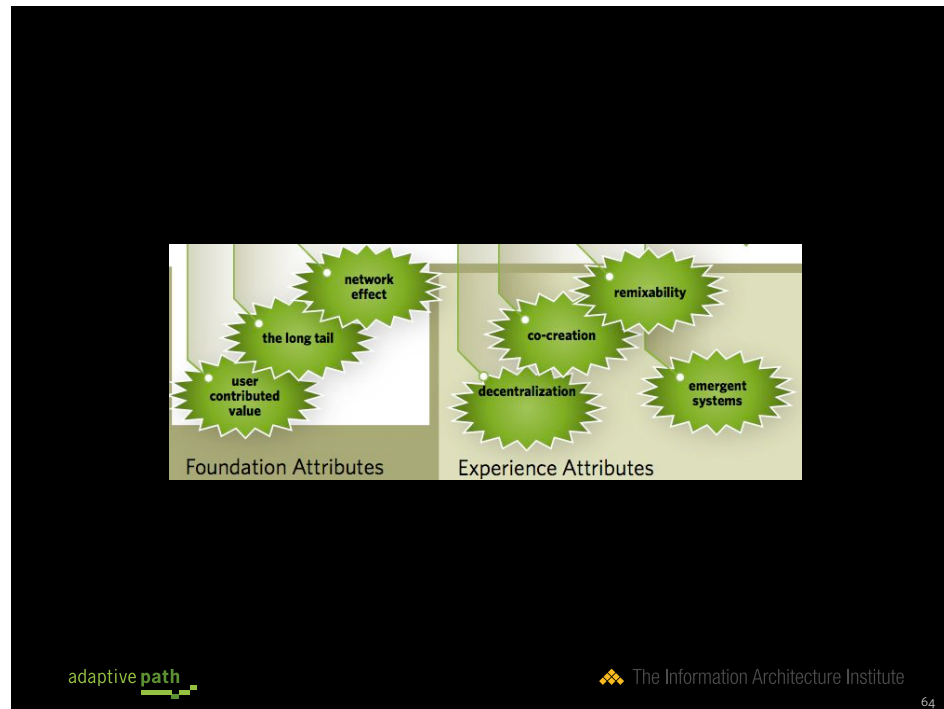
Information undergirds and pervades a remarkable amount of our daily lives. I want an information architect, or, at least, someone aware of the principles of information architecture, to have a hand in the design of the spaces and processes that have information as a substrate.

Wouldn't some IA thinking help?

And note: I call it "IA thinking." Some of you might be aware of this concept of "design thinking." The idea, essentially, to apply the "thinking" approaches that designers take to other realms, typically business problems.

Well, I believe the world could do with more "IA thinking." IAs are, at heart, exceedingly pragmatic problem solvers. Yeah, we like things that look good, and we recognize the power of an emotional connection. But we also recognize that, at the end of the day, people seek to just get shit done. And we love building systems that allow people to do that.

What joins together all the people in this room is, at heart, a desire for pragmatic problem solving with the sole result to



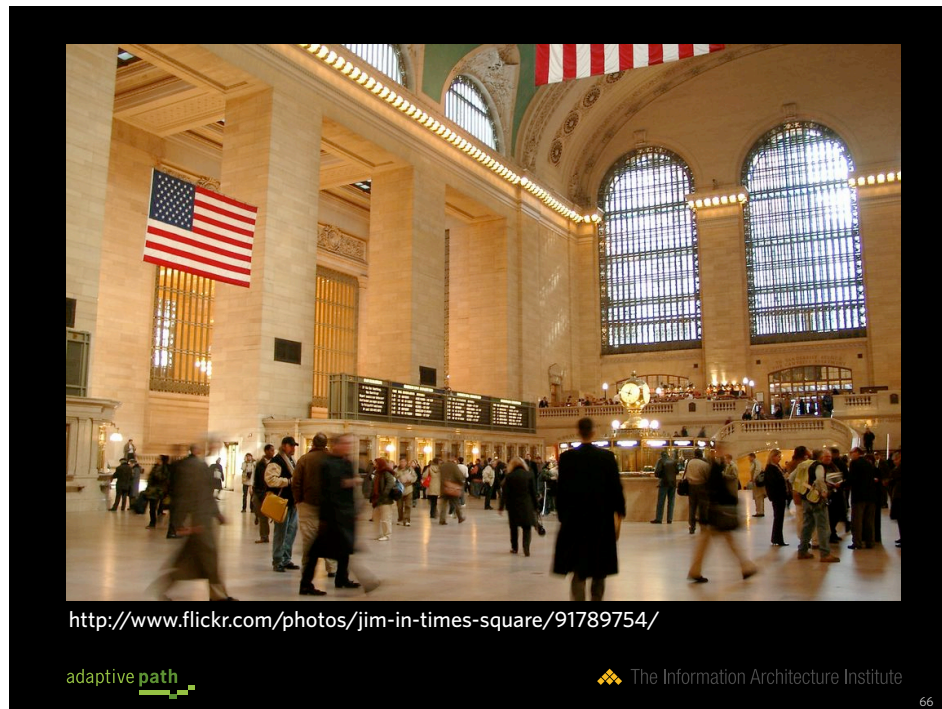
Another challenge facing information architecture is what folks call Web 2.0. Web 2.0 and tagging have been a huge theme at this conference. And some might think that web 2.0, with its tagging, its folksonomies, its user-generated content and structure, signals a death knell for IA. That it's time for the "well-designed metadata crowd" to hang up its spurs and let the users have at it.

In fact, in a pre-conference seminar, it was suggested that IAs need to redefine themselves, and their practice, in order to meet the realities of Web 2.0.

Well, I don't. If we look at David Fiorito's brilliantly succinct description of what information architects do:

organization, categorization, and navigation (maybe that should be wayfinding)

David Fiorito



All of that is relevant to web 2.0. In fact, I think that web 2.0 puts the "architecture" in information architecture. Think of an architect. They design the space. People flow through it, meet in it, contribute to it.

With that model, the bulk of information architecture currently on the web isn't really architecture -- it's some form of hyperdimensional document organizing. We're not creating a space that people move through, and engage with. We're classifying material to be retrieved.

But with web 2.0, we are providing an architecture -- a space, a platform through which and upon which people move, contribute, and change. And the many discussions on Web 2.0, tagging, and the like have demonstrated that we're thinking and doing on this problem more actively and more intelligently than almost anyone else.

For me, I think a huge opportunity going forward is thinking about how the fundamental attributes of Web 2.0 can intersect with cross-channel information architecture.

If information is a substrate running through an increasing amount of our "real-world" lives, and we believe that these web 2.0 principles are important for the future of information architecture, how do we merge the two?

Obligatory Flickr image

The screenshot shows a Flickr photo page for a user named 'peterme'. The main image is titled 'The Choir System' and features a large serif title. Below the title is a paragraph of text: 'All people living in Moravian congregation towns were divided into groups called "choirs" by age, sex, and marital status. The choirs included Married People, Single Brothers, Single Sisters, Widows, Widowers, Older Girls, Older Boys, and Children. Each choir had its own work and responsibility toward the community and each other.' To the right of the main image is a sidebar with a 'Classification System' header, a 'peterm's photostream' section showing 1288 photos, and a 'Carolina Road Trip (Set)' section showing 71 photos. Below the main image is a comment box with the text 'Add your comment' and a small note '(Some HTML is OK.)'. The page footer includes the text 'adapтив', 'Institute', and the number '67'.

Home | Tags | Groups | People | Invite

Logged in as peterme (2 new) | Your Account | Help | Sign Out

Photos: Yours · Upload · Organize · Your Contacts · Explore

flickr

Classification System

ADD NOTE SEND TO GROUP ADD TO SET BLOG THIS ALL SIZES ORDER PRINTS ROTATE DELETE

The Choir System

All people living in Moravian congregation towns were divided into groups called "choirs" by age, sex, and marital status. The choirs included Married People, Single Brothers, Single Sisters, Widows, Widowers, Older Girls, Older Boys, and Children. Each choir had its own work and responsibility toward the community and each other.

Add your comment

(Some HTML is OK.)

Classification System

peterm's photostream

1288 photos
View as slideshow

Carolina Road Trip (Set)

71 photos
View as slideshow

Tags

- oldsalem [x]
- sign [x]
- choirsystem [x]
- classification [x]

Add a tag

Additional Information

- © All rights reserved (change)
- Taken with a Canon PowerShot SD400.
- More properties
- Taken on December 22, 2005 (edit)
- See different sizes
- Viewed 33 times. (Not including you)

adapтив

Institute

67

(Walk through image)



Whenever I think of this idea, I think of Barnes and Noble. Here is a retail organization, with hundreds of stores, millions of customers, a website, delivery services, store events. How could the Barnes and Noble experience benefit from the explicit application of cross-channel information architecture and the principles of Web 2.0?

Another key aspect of the larger context is what some have dubbed the "end of cyberspace."

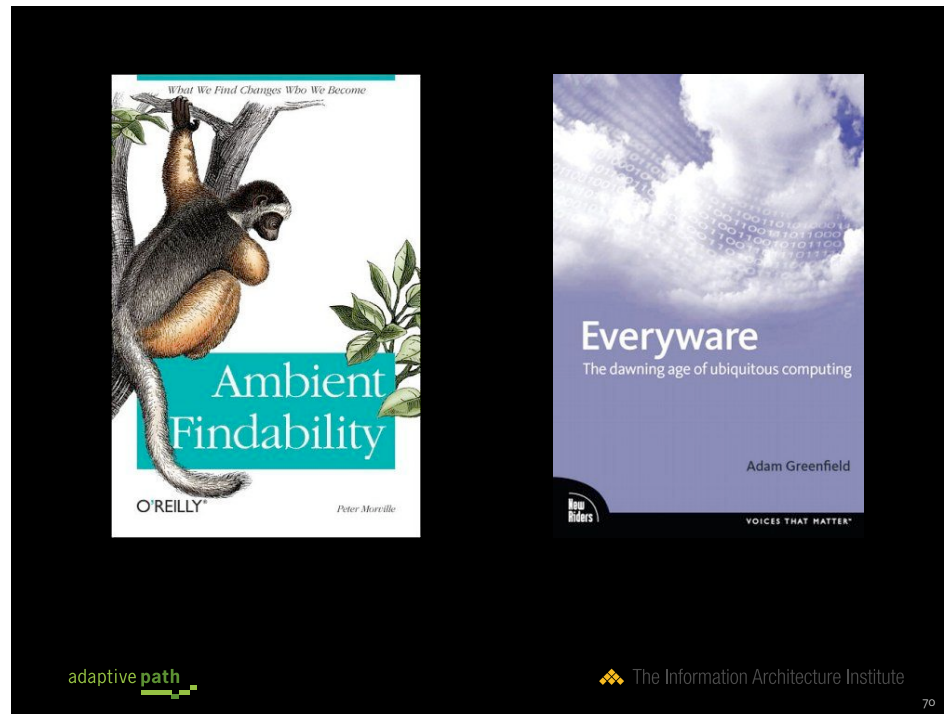
"Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding..."

William Gibson 🇨🇦

For the longest time, "cyberspace" was considered a domain separate from the real world.

But as digital networked media pervades more and more of our lives, the idea of a discreet region called "cyberspace" starts to feel like an anachronism. Who here has a mobile phone on them? One that can send photos by email, for example? Well, you're all carrying "cyberspace" in your pocket. And once that happens, distinguishing that from the "real world" becomes impossible.

And who is best suited to address "the online in offline space"? I think we are. We can appreciate the qualities of the information that form the substance that flows through (something something).



Is it any wonder that two of the best books about "ubiquitous computing" "invisible computers", whatever you want to refer to this idea of information systems embedded in the world around, two of the best books were written by self proclaimed information architects?

Ambient Findability by Peter Morville and Everyware by Adam Greenfield embrace the human aspects of this embedded chip world.

They also share a potentially surprising theme -- both authors are remarkably concerned with the humanistic aspects of these new technologies. Peter's final chapter attempts to come to grip with the social ramifications of ambient findability. Adam Greenfield's book is pretty much a treatise on ethical design of ubiquitous computing.

I think this is another important aspect that information architects bring that other disciplines neglect in their discourse. We wear our hearts on our sleeves. We're a bunch of idealistic freaks, who think, perhaps naively, that we really can make the world a better place.



And that, I think, speaks to the fundamental duality shared by the people in this room.

We're idealistic about our goals, our ends.

But we're pragmatic about how to get it done.

I just had lunch with a friend, someone for whom this was her first summit, and she asked, "who are you people?" She had trouble figuring out just what brought us all together.

We geek out about information problems. We draw from a range of disciplines to inform our work, and we try our hardest to solve these information problems the best we can, without getting too caught up in issues of dogma and territoriality.

And these information problems continue to get bigger, hairier, and more complex. And we have the skills, and the mindset, to contribute to the solution of these problems. Don't let a lack of confidence inhibit you. Don't let other people define your role for you. Demonstrate your ability to help. Don't let small thinking get in your way.

I can't imagine a better group of folks to take on these challenges. And I look forward to working on them with you.